Meeting the Challenge... Women in Sales

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Meeting the Challenge...

Women in Sales

A Change Agent Project by

Ontario Women's Directorate

and

General Motors of Canada Limited

Making a Difference...

Women in Sales

The many faces of women in sales.
You could be one of them ...
or they could be part of your sales team.

Front row — left to right: Leesa Avrith, Linda Mak, Carol Suffern

Back row — left to right: Ruth Maluga-Atkins, Monika Kelly, Marilyn Browne, Mary Anne Harris

The Change Agent Program

In 1986, the Ontario Women's Directorate launched a Change Agent Program designed to encourage the development of innovative employment equity projects in the private sector.

The purpose of the program is two fold. It is intended to improve the employment status and representation of women in the workforce, and to provide examples of existing employment equity projects for employers to consider when developing their own employment equity initiatives. The Ontario Women's Directorate provides consultative and financial support to eligible organizations wishing to implement such a project. In return, participating organizations agree to share with other Ontario employers the information they have gathered from their projects.

In 1988, General Motors of Canada Limited agreed to act as co-facilitator of a Change Agent project to produce a publication designed to increase the number of women in non-traditional sales. Seven other companies also agreed to participate in the project. They are: Camco Inc., Canada Trustco Mortgage Company (Canada Trust), Cyanamid Canada Inc., RBC Dominion Securities Inc., Passport International Automobiles (a division of General Motors), Pitney Bowes and 3M Canada Inc.

This publication, Women in Non-Traditional Sales, is the result of this Change Agent project. For more information on the Change Agent Program please contact:

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About the Publication

The purpose of this publication, co-produced by the Ontario Women's Directorate and General Motors of Canada Limited, is to promote the employment of women in non-traditional sales occupations. It has two primary target audiences: women and employers.

Non-traditional sales occupations are defined as those that have been historically male-dominated — such as industrial, commercial and technical sales. It is hoped that this publication will stimulate women's interest in careers in non-traditional sales, and that it will encourage employers to increase the number of women in male-dominated sales forces.

The publication profiles seven women who have successful careers in non-traditional sales occupations. Their experiences, achievements and contributions to their organizations provide encouragement for other women to investigate the potential of a career in non-traditional sales. Their success also provides good impetus for employers to remove the barriers which continue to prevent women from entering male-dominated sales occupations.

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Introduction

The Changing Labor Force

Most employers recognize that the composition of the labor force has undergone significant change in the last 20 years. They also realize that they must adapt to this change if they are to maintain their competitive edge in an increasingly competitive business environment.

Ontario's employers are moving their human resource management strategies away from those which address a labor force composed primarily of white males. In doing so, they are accommodating the increasing numbers of women, visible minorities, native people and people with disabilities, who make up a large percentage of the labor force.

Companies, like those profiled in this publication, are also reviewing their human resources policies and practices to ensure that they maximize the potential of this changing labor force. They are revising traditional job advertising strategies, re-evaluating hiring and promotion procedures, developing new assessment tools to eliminate unnecessary job requirements, and implementing employment equity strategies to ensure that designated groups have equal access to, and participation in, the workforce.

Women in Sales

Women in the Workforce

Since one of the most dramatic societal changes has been the increased numbers of women in the workforce, and their contribution to the economy, women have generally been the first group designated for a company's employment equity program.

While most women continue to work in relatively low-paying service and clerical jobs, employment equity initiatives have resulted in women making some gains in the workplace. Women now have access to a wider range of jobs than ever before and they are making real progress in many organizations. They are also beginning to move into non-traditional occupations which offer higher earnings. One of the non-traditional occupations which provides women with significant financial, professional and personal benefits is sales.

Women have always worked in sales. They have worked in retail, they have sold door-to-door, on the telephone and from their homes. For the most part, however, women have been channelled into sales jobs that have provided them with neither significant financial remuneration nor an opportunity for advancement through the organization.

Women have traditionally been hired to sell products associated with their role as wife, mother and homemaker — cosmetics, women's and children's clothing, toys, groceries, fabrics and so on. Even when they have been hired to sell home-related goods, they have generally been relegated to jobs selling small items (such as china and linens) while their male colleagues have sold "big-ticket" items (such as stoves and refrigerators) on which commission is also paid.

Because the sales jobs women have typically filled have been at the bottom end of the earnings scale women have tended not to give serious consideration to a career in sales. But times are changing. A number of recent initiatives, such as the introduction of employment equity, have opened up high-paying, non-traditional sales jobs to women — and women are taking advantage of these openings.

The Evolution of the Salesperson

Sales has suffered over the years from a number of negative, stereotypical images. When we think of the "typical" salesperson we tend to imagine a slick, fast-talking, unscrupulous man with the gift of the gab, an endless supply of jokes and a sample case on wheels. But this kind of salesperson is fast disappearing.

Today's salespeople are professionals. A number of them have post-secondary school education and have undergone considerable sales and product training throughout their careers — training that is much more sophisticated and intensive today than it was even 10 years ago.

It is no longer considered sufficient, or even acceptable, for salespeople to be "best buddies" with their clients. A salesperson is more of a business consultant — she or he establishes a long-term relationship with customers and helps solve their business problems. Today's salespeople know it is more

important to be a good listener than a fast talker.

Professional ethics play a significant role in the way salespeople conduct their business. Similarly, most organizations have strict rules about how salespeople should and should not perform their duties.

Good product knowledge is considered key to a salesperson's success. Given rapid advances in high technology, salespeople today are selling increasingly more complicated equipment and must keep up-to-date not only with their own company's products but with their competitors' too.

The evolution of the sales professional has had a positive side-effect for women. Employers are placing more emphasis on professional abilities and interpersonal skills than on finding sales staff with the stereotypical "sales personality." Customers now look for salespeople who can help them run their operations more effectively — regardless of gender. This has resulted in considerably improved opportunities for women to secure non-traditional sales jobs and the accompanying benefits.

Why Women Should Consider Non-Traditional Sales

The earnings potential of non-traditional sales has caught women's interest and attracted them into professional sales careers in industrial, commercial and technical industries, as well as insurance and securities.

Compensation in these areas is usually a combination of commission, bonus and incentives and may include a base salary. The commission and incentive components in these fields give salespeople the opportunity to make significant earnings, while exercising a large degree of flexibility and control over when and where they work. They also work with minimum supervision and, providing they meet predetermined sales objectives, they are free to determine the amount of time they wish to dedicate to the position. These are all positive considerations which appeal to women.

Because the sales team is an integral part of any organization and is often its driving force, good sales people are customarily scrutinized for senior management potential. This is borne out by studies which indicate that almost one-third of chief executive officers have sales and marketing backgrounds.

One final consideration favoring professional sales careers is the results-oriented nature of this field which ensures objective comparisons between women's performance and that of their male counterparts.

Breaking Barriers

The historical reasons given for keeping women out of non-traditional sales occupations were numerous. Selling was considered to be a "man's job," which women couldn't do. It wasn't an "appropriate" career for women. Customers wouldn't accept female salespeople. Women wouldn't last. There was little or no room for discussion on the issue and there were few employment equity programs to formally discredit these assertions.

As the women featured in this publication have demonstrated, women are proving to be extremely effective, successful salespeople in occupations long considered the exclusive domain of men. In spite of their example, and the example of hundreds of women like them, however, saleswomen still face bias and discrimination in the workplace.

Behavior tolerated in men is fre-

quently deemed unacceptable from women, such as sitting alone at a bar. Women still encounter individuals who address them as "honey," "sweetheart" and "dear." They must also deal, at times, with sexist remarks and jokes. Some male customers still resist female salespeople wanting to pick up the cheque for lunch. Also, women are still prone to sexual harassment on the job.

Most of the women profiled in this publication have had the support and co-operation of both clients and colleagues, but they have also had to deal with gender bias — ranging from inadvertent to blatant.

What then, makes the difference between positive and negative experiences in the workplace — particularly for women who enter non-traditional occupations?

Commitment From The Top

Both the women and the employers interviewed for this publication indicated their belief that the key to successful integration of women into male-dominated environments is commitment from senior management. When there is visible support from the president and/or chief executive officer, and when his or her commitment is communicated to senior management and enforced by line management, then the working environment is more accepting of change, and women's entry into it more successful.

The women and employers who participated in this project also feel that although attitudes toward women in the workplace are slow to change, they are changing. The older women have seen attitudes change first hand. The younger ones notice a difference in attitude between some older men and the young men beside whom they have studied and worked — and against whom they have competed. All participants agreed that it is changing attitudes that are allowing, and even encouraging, more women to move into male-dominated jobs.

As the number of successful women in sales increases, more women will be attracted to the field and more companies will be encouraged to hire them. For, as history has proven, nothing succeeds as well as success.

Summary

Non-traditional sales jobs provide women with one of the best career opportunities they will have in the 1990s.

Unlike the sales jobs the majority of women have filled, and continue to fill, non-traditional sales provide women with an excellent opportunity for personal and professional satisfaction and development and, more importantly, for considerable financial compensation.

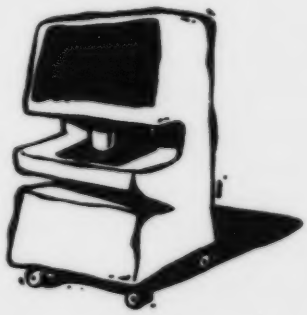
Today's saleswomen are selling everything from chemicals to computers, and from investments to insurance. They are building successful careers in a tough, competitive, demanding and complex environment. They are making good money — from $35,000 in entry-level positions to more than $100,000 a year, depending on the field and their level of experience. Finally, they are destroying the myths and misconceptions surrounding all women who enter male-dominated professions.

The seven successful saleswomen you will meet in this publication vary in age from 30 to 60. They come from different socio-economic backgrounds. They have different levels of education, different interests and different aspirations.

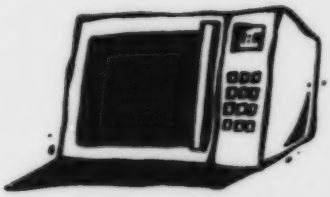
In spite of their differences, however, they do have certain qualities in common: they are all risk-takers, and they are all hard-working, determined, and confident.

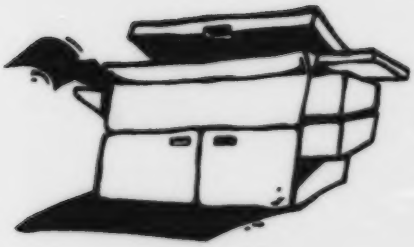
None of the women would call themselves exceptional, in spite of their considerable achievements. In fact, they would undoubtedly emphasize that many women have the ability to be as successful as they are. But they are exceptional because they are making it in what has long been considered a man's world.

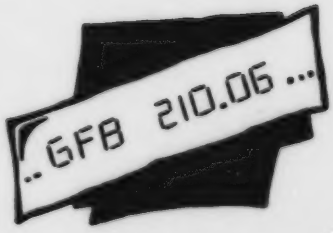
These women, and the companies that employ them, are also an inspiration. They have taken the lead in breaking down the barriers which have prevented women's equal participation in the workplace and, in so doing, they have opened up a whole range of employment opportunities for women in fields where doors were once firmly closed against them.



The Profiles







Rosanne Jurjevich

Sales Representative

3M Canada Inc. *— a diversified, international manufacturing company which produces a wide range of industrial, electronic, information imaging, life sciences and consumer products.*

"If people in school had impressed upon me that no occupation — including sales — was closed to me as a woman, I'd never have taken a diploma in secretarial science," says Rosanne Jurjevich, a sales representative for the document systems division of 3M Canada Inc. "I'd have gone for business from the beginning." ✯ Because of her training as a secretary, however, Jurjevich was first hired by 3M in London, Ontario as a clerical worker in the personnel department. This position enabled her to work at a number of tasks that weren't strictly secretarial and she soon began to look at the possibility of changing her career. "I thought about

But then I looked at the money people were making in sales and I decided I'd like to take a shot at that!"

personnel work, as a career, at first," she says, "but then I looked at the money people were making in sales and I decided I'd like to take a shot at that!"

Encouraged by managers in the organization who recognized her potential, in 1979 Jurjevich applied for, and got, her sales position in Toronto.

Being a diversified manufacturing company producing a wide range of industrial, health care, electronic and consumer products, 3M has always offered unique opportunities for all its employees. This is particularly true with so-called "non-traditional" opportunities for women. "Jurjevich's decision to pursue a sales career in the complex office equipment field is a good example of this," says Mike Calhoun, 3M's human resources manager for development and staffing.

"3M has always maintained a conscious determination to consider all potential and qualified candidates. It is this broad perspective that continues to open up opportunities and ensures fairness and equality in our personnel policies and practices," says Calhoun.

Calhoun feels a number of significant societal changes have also contributed to recent increases in the number of women in non-traditional occupations and in more senior capacities in organizations. He feels an increasing number of women are broadening their educational training, for example, and this, in turn, allows them more options. "I'm often asked to talk to university students about careers in sales," he says. "Ten years ago you could have counted the number of female business students on one hand and have fingers left over. Now, I'd say that more than 50 per cent of the audience is female."

As women began to move into non-traditional sales occupations, Calhoun says there was some discussion about how women would be accepted by primarily male customers. "Those concerns have not been valid or considered as obstacles. 3M continues to encourage and support women in the pursuit of these opportunities. We look at all qualified candidates because we'd be missing a lot of great talent if we didn't," indicates Calhoun.

Jurjevich has also found that companies' fears that men may not want to deal with women are misplaced. When she started making her first sales calls she dealt with manufacturing accounts where she would have to talk to engineers — the majority of whom were men. "Some of them would say, 'I didn't expect a lady salesperson,'" she says, "and they'd kind of roll their eyes, and you'd really have to grind your way through those accounts. But these were isolated incidents. I find this attitude has changed dramatically over the years. I think people now award business based on who does the best job."

Jurjevich sells a number of document-handling systems to manage files. This includes optical disc and microfilm equipment. Because the purchase of such systems can cost companies

hundreds of thousands of dollars and can require a company to make a considerable change in its operation, the selling cycle is a long one. "In a normal sales environment, making 12 calls on a single account would be unheard of," says Jurjevich. "In mine, it's standard." For this reason, Jurjevich sees her job as being more of a consultant than a sales representative. She has to understand her clients' needs; recognize the impact that the use of the 3M equipment might have on other areas of operation; make a proposal and recommendations on how the current system should be changed; make presentations to demonstrate the effectiveness of the 3M equipment in meeting clients' specific requirements; and then make the final sales pitch.

"It can be frustrating," she says, "because you sometimes feel you're never going to make a sale. But that's another thing you have to learn — when to distinguish a prospect from a suspect!"

The positive side of this kind of sales job is that you get a tremendous sense of satisfaction when you've done all of this hard work and the deal goes through. "You have the primary responsibility for your own results," says Jurjevich, "and I like that. And, of course, you're rewarded financially according to how well you're doing."

Sales can be one of the most financially rewarding careers. For the type of work Jurjevich does, a significant portion of the total compensation package comes from commission on the sale of large document handling systems. Technical competence, professional persistence, and strong interpersonal skills can reap excellent financial rewards and personal satisfaction. It is common for someone straight out of college and doing a good job to earn $30,000+ in their first year. Jurjevich's income doubled as she became more proficient after a few years on the job.

Because 3M is so diversified, it generally looks for people with a number of different educational and professional attributes depending on the position which is being filled. If the company is looking for people to go into health-care sales, for example, it would probably search out candidates from health and life sciences programs. Prospective employees also have to be willing to relocate, since the company has branches across Canada, and they have to have the potential to be successful in a number of progressively responsible positions.

The company encourages promotion from within and individual growth and development and motivational seminars for support staff are held annually. This group was targeted by the company because it was felt that support people are generally overlooked when it comes to specific developmental opportunities, and because the company wanted to encourage them to broaden their horizons in terms of career opportunities.

"I think a lot of employers' doubts about hiring women are self doubts," says Calhoun. "If you aren't looking today at hiring women, who make up nearly half the labor force, then you've got a real problem."

Part of Jurjevich's success at her job has come from a learned ability to deal with the rejection that is part and parcel of every salesperson's job.

"You have to have the same kind of attitude that Bobby McFerrin has when he sings 'Don't Worry, Be Happy,'" she says. "Sometimes you work with a client for three months and you think everything's going along fine and then the client up and buys somebody else's product. If you take that personally, you're dead. Maybe your competitor had a better price; maybe that company's equipment had a feature yours didn't. Whatever the reason your client went with someone else, you have to be able to say to yourself, 'O.K., end of story. On to the next customer.'"

Joan Flood

Manager, Farm Supply Centre

Cyanamid Canada Inc. *— an international, research-based company which manufactures medical, agricultural, chemical and consumer products. It has 14 farm supply centres in Ontario and Quebec.*

Born and raised on a farm in Essex County, Joan Flood is more than familiar with the significant challenges farmers face every day of their working lives. ☆ This practical knowledge, combined with 11 years part-time experience as a secretary for the Cyanamid Farm Supply Centre in Maidstone and Harrow and an upgraded night-school education in agronomy, made Flood confident she could manage the centre. "But when I approached the company about it I was told that my male customers wouldn't accept me," she says. "I argued with them a bit, I said I didn't think my gender

"If you believe in yourself, there's no obstacle you can't overcome."

really mattered, and I told them I felt it was my knowledge and rapport with customers that was important. But management, at that time, felt I would never be accepted by the farming community."

As a result, Flood left Cyanamid at the end of that season to accept a full-time job as director of the Windsor/Essex County Volunteer Services. When she was called by Cyanamid at the beginning of the next season and asked if she would be returning to her secretarial job, she stood her ground and said no. "Two weeks later," she recalls, "Cyanamid offered me the position as manager." She has held that position for 12 years.

Ted Tait, who was district manager for farm supply centres in southwestern Ontario when Flood was hired, was the person responsible for getting the company to change its mind. "I guess I just didn't have the same concerns as the company," he says. "I knew Joan could do the job, for one thing. I also believed we had to keep up with new trends — we had to get more women into jobs like this. And I thought we had to get over our prejudice that women wouldn't be well received by the farming community. I felt that a lot of the obstacles we assumed would prevent women from being successful in this position simply wouldn't be there."

Flood understands the company's concerns about how she would be accepted in a male-dominated environment, because she had some of the same concerns herself. "I had no qualms about my ability to do the job," she says, "but I did wonder about the reaction I'd get, not only from the male farmers but from their wives too."

Flood found that some farmers did have reservations. They didn't question her ability, because most had worked with her for a long time, but they wondered if she'd be able to succeed in what they considered a "man's world."

"But I asked: 'Does your wife work beside you in the field? Does she drive the tractor? Does she take the grain to the elevator?' Of course, they had to admit that she did. So then I'd ask about their daughters. Did they feel their daughters should have to do secretarial work all their lives, if they wanted, and had the ability, to do other things? They understood what I was saying."

Apart from a few isolated instances, Flood says her customers have been very supportive of her and that her sales for Cyanamid show it.

Although Flood is the only female farm supply centre manager working for Cyanamid, Pierre Robitaille, director of employee and public relations believes this will change in the next five to ten years. "Operating a farm supply centre is a unique job," says Robitaille. "You have to have run a large farming operation; you have to have good business sense; and, today, you have to have a degree in agriculture. Unfortunately, we're still hard pressed to find women who have all of these qualifications."

Increasing numbers of women are already moving into Cyanamid's sales forces and into a number of occupa-

tions in the company which were previously male-dominated. Currently, 27 out of a total of 112 sales representatives in the company are women. The company also has a female veterinarian in its animal health division and the head of purchasing is a woman.

Cyanamid has made a firm commitment to hiring women, visible minorities and people with disabilities, through its equal opportunity program. It is currently revising its recruitment, hiring and promotion practices, to ensure they are being applied fairly and do not inadvertently hinder members of these groups from obtaining positions for which they are qualified.

"Women have an excellent track record in our company," says Robitaille. "They are professional; they have a good background in their field; and they understand the business they're in. I think, today, this transcends any concerns we might once have had about whether they'll be accepted in what is still a male-oriented business."

New employees coming into the agribusiness side of Cyanamid work for one of three divisions in the company: animal health, plant health, or research and development. People hired into sales and marketing can move into sales and marketing management and then into general management.

Sales staff are paid a salary, bonus and incentives. Approximately 75 per cent of a sales person's income comes from a base salary and 25 per cent from bonuses and incentives. While potential earnings vary between chemical, pharmaceutical and agricultural sales forces, a successful salesperson at Cyanamid generally makes an annual base salary between $35,000 and $40,000 after two years with the company. Farm supply centre managers are paid salary only.

Flood's achievements have been the result of long hours, hard work, and a determination to succeed. She has always made a point of going out on to the farms to visit both current and prospective customers and she feels her knowledge of the business has earned her their respect.

"I remember, one night, going out to see a new customer I was determined to get for Cyanamid," she recalls. "I went right into his barn to talk to him, and, since it was spring, I was up to my ears in mud. He said to me: 'If you'll do all this to get my business, how can I say no?' I've had that farmer as a customer ever since. So I had to earn the farmers' respect. I had to prove I wasn't afraid to get my hands dirty."

Farmers in the Harrow area grow tomatoes, small vegetables, soybeans, wheat and some corn. The farm supply centre Flood manages provides farmers with agricultural chemicals, both liquid and dry fertilizers, and with rental equipment. It is Flood's job to manage the plant and the staff, generally consisting of three full-time people off-season, and another four in the spring.

It isn't unusual for Flood to work a 15-hour day, in the springtime when farmers are planting. The rest of the year she usually works from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

In addition to running the centre, however, Flood believes it is important for her to be active in the community and to get to know farming families. She runs breakfast and lunch-time seminars for her customers and keeps up-to-date with the agribusiness by reading farming publications, and by attending seminars organized by the chemical companies and by Cyanamid.

This makes for a very busy life, but it's one made easier by a very supportive husband and family who share housekeeping chores. It also helps that Flood loves her job and that she's determined to succeed at it. "I think women can do anything they want to do today," she says, "but they have to believe in themselves. If you believe in yourself, there's no obstacle you can't overcome."

Nancy Cobban

Stockbroker

RBC Dominion Securities Inc. — *one of the largest stockbrokerage firms in Canada, with branches in the United States, Europe and the Far East. The firm has approximately 600 licensed representatives in its 65 Canadian offices.*

"Our job is to talk to people who have money and who want to invest it," says Adrian Coote, vice-president and director of RBC Dominion Securities Inc. ☆ "In the past, we've made certain assumptions about who those people were and who should be talking to them. Up until 10 years ago, we always considered that it was the man in the household that handled investments; and that men wanted to talk to men. But that is all changing." ☆ When Coote started in the securities business 20 years ago he says there might have been four female stockbrokers in the firm he worked for — and that

Cobban says she also had clients who say they are working with her because she's a woman.

was an exception. In RBC Dominion Securities today there are 63 female stockbrokers across Canada (more than 10 per cent of what the company calls its "retail" sales force). One of them is Nancy Cobban.

When Cobban decided to get into the brokerage business, she knew it was male-dominated. With this in mind, she made a list of firms for whom she'd like to work, and prioritized the list, putting at the bottom those she knew had few, if any, female sales staff.

"It was very important to me that the firm I selected had women already there," she says, "because it's hard to build a clientele when you start in this business and I wanted all the support I could get. I didn't think I'd get that support if I was the first or second woman in the company. I don't know if that would have been the case, but I wasn't interested in finding out." The company at the top of Cobban's list was the firm now known as RBC Dominion Securities. She was offered a position with the organization in 1981.

To become a stockbroker you are required to take the Canadian Securities Course which is offered by the Canadian Securities Institute. Once you have been employed by a securities firm, you then have to sit the Registered Representatives exam to become eligible to be licensed. Over and above that, according to Coote, companies like RBC Dominion Securities are simply looking for people who are "highly competitive, goal-oriented, independent and energetic."

Stockbrokers work strictly on commission, but RBC Dominion Securities protects new brokers' income as they learn the ropes. During the first two months on the job, new employees are paid a salary (annualized out between $20,000 and $25,000) while they are training. This base salary is gradually reduced and supplemented by commission until employees are on full commission (33 1/3 per cent) at the end of a year's employment.

All new sales staff participate in a training program, lasting about two months, which consists of a combination of classroom and in-house instruction. Employees learn about the company and its various departments; they get sales and product training; and they learn about the administrative aspects of their work. Six months after the initial training period is over, they are given a 3-4 day brush-up course.

Most of Cobban's day is spent on the telephone essentially advising her clients when to buy, sell or hold on to their investments. "I act as a link between our analysts and the client," she says. "My role is to help my clients fulfil their financial goals."

To do this, Cobban has to get to know her clients well, to understand what stage of their life they are at, and what personal and financial objectives they have for the future. "But I'm not a financial planner," she emphasizes. "My function isn't to help clients make

up a budget. That should all be done before they come to me."

Cobban says a broker's clients are usually a reflection of his or her own personality. For the most part, Cobban's clients are average people. Many are in two-income families, most are over 45 and some, but not all, are well educated. "Some brokers like to have a handful of very wealthy clients," she explains, "but that's not for me. If five clients provide all of your business and you lose one you've just lost 20 per cent of your business — and that's very difficult to replace."

When stockbrokers start out they have to build their own clientele. Initially, like most companies in male-dominated business environments, RBC Dominion Securities had some concerns that this would be difficult for women because most customers were still men, but this has not proven to be the case for Cobban and her female colleagues.

"I can think of only two individuals whom I felt had a problem with me being a woman," says Cobban. "I remember sitting in the offices of both of these prospective clients thinking to myself, 'If I were a man you'd have made a decision by now.' In both cases I approached them, very politely, with what I was feeling. One of them said he didn't think it was a problem, but I could tell that he wasn't saying what he was thinking. He never became a client. The other person said, 'Frankly, I've never had a female broker and, now that you mention it, maybe that is true.' That person became a client and is a client to this day."

Cobban says she also had clients who say they are working with her because she's a woman. They feel, she says, that women work harder for them in order to prove themselves. "That may be true for some women," she says, "but I work hard because I'm a hard worker."

Hard work brings rewards for all sales people who work on straight commission and the remuneration can be particularly significant for people in the brokerage business. On the other hand, earnings are very much at the whim of the economy. "We're a cyclical business," says Coote. "In good times you can make as much money as a stockbroker, as you can in any business you want to name. The sky is the limit. In 1987, a lot of our female brokers made well into six figures. But 1988 was a tough, tough year."

Hard work also means long hours, particularly in the beginning. But those hours can also be flexible. "Retail sales people in this industry operate very much as they would if they were running their own business. As long as they live within industry and stock-exchange rules and produce enough revenue, they can do business when they like," says Coote. "On the other hand, if you want to come into this business and work 9 to 5, then forget it. You're not going to be successful."

Though Cobban has been working

in the stockbrokerage business for seven years, her hours are just about as long today as they were when she started. She generally arrives in the office between 7:30 a.m. and 8 a.m., she leaves around 6 p.m., and she spends two or three hours doing job-related reading or performing administrative tasks every night. On the weekend, she'll spend another three or four hours reading and keeping up-to-date on the business.

Cobban's hard work and her dedication to her job, have made her one of the most successful sales people in RBC Dominion Securities today. "There are a lot of excellent saleswomen like Nancy out there," says Coote. "Companies who aren't seeing that, are limiting their market."

Carolyn Huneck

Sales Manager

***Pitney Bowes**— a worldwide supplier of a broad range of business equipment, business supplies and business financial services.*

When Carolyn Huneck was asked if she'd like to go for an interview for a sales position with Pitney Bowes, she did one thing before making up her mind. She called the firm's receptionist and asked whether or not Pitney Bowes had any successful women in the corporation. "That was going to be one of my criteria for accepting a job," she says. "Unless I found out that there were successful women in the company, or that there were good opportunities for women, I didn't want to work there." ☆ Huneck started her sales career with Pitney Bowes in July, 1984. In April, 1987 she was made sales manager for western Toronto and now

Sales provides the most equal opportunity you can think of, in terms of earnings, because the sky is the limit.

manages five male and three female staff who sell mailing equipment and photocopiers — two of the major products sold by the business equipment division of Pitney Bowes.

Born and raised in Toronto, Huneck had held a number of different jobs after graduating from Grade 13. She finally decided to try sales because she thought it would be something she'd enjoy and because she felt it would be the fastest way into a career. She worked in two sales positions that didn't work out well before coming to Pitney Bowes. "It was sort of my last chance," she says.

It turned out to be the best one.

While all sales people at Pitney Bowes work on straight commission, the company pays them a salary during their initial training. The salary gradually tapers off according to individual needs. "Some people get up-to-speed very fast," says Steve McGill, vice-president, eastern region, "and it's to their advantage to go on straight commission because they can earn a lot more money. We expect a second-year sales person to be making at least $40,000 a year. Our most successful people would certainly make in excess of $100,000 a year. Sales provides the most equal opportunity you can think of, in terms of earnings, because the sky is the limit. You can also decide that if you're making $50,000 a year and you're comfortable with that, then that's where you'll stay."

Training is ongoing through a sales person's career at Pitney Bowes. The initial training period, which consists of training in the branch under the supervision of the sales manager, lasts for about three months. During this time sales people receive both sales and product training; they accompany sales representatives on sales calls; and they then go for a week long, formal training program at the company's head office before they go out on the road.

Huneck's job, when she first started with the company, was to park her car, walk up and down the street, and knock on the doors of businesses still using stamps, to sell them postage meters. "I really came up through 'The School of Hard Knocks,'" she says, "having people slam the door in my face!" She worked in this position for two years and then moved to the next level of selling which was to call on companies that already had Pitney Bowes equipment to encourage them to upgrade it. After nine months at this level she became a sales manager — a position that would generally take quite a bit longer to attain, but for which Huneck and the company thought she was ready, given her successful track record. It was also a significant achievement in a business which for generations has been dominated by men.

"We started to hire women into the sales force back around 1977, but there were very few of them at that time," says McGill. "Women now make up 20 per cent of our sales staff. There's no question that it was harder on the pioneers than it is on our female sales people today."

Any company moving women into non-traditional occupations faces resistance at the beginning — either internally or externally, and sometimes

both. "I did hear some customer resistance to women at first," says McGill, "but there'll always be someone out there who doesn't like someone from our company for one reason or another. We simply can't tailor our firm to those kinds of attitudes. When you get down to it, you want to get the job done. If it's being done by a man, a woman, a visible minority or a person with a disability it really doesn't matter."

Pitney Bowes has made a firm commitment to hiring women throughout the organization, at all levels of their operations. It has a number of women in management positions and just recently appointed its first female vice-president in Canada. "When we started to hire women into our sales force, a number of them quickly became very successful," says McGill, "so we realized there was a huge pool of talent out there that no one had really tapped before and that it didn't make sense to ignore it."

Customer satisfaction surveys conducted by the company also showed that most of the people making purchase decisions on their equipment were women. "So we had to ask ourselves, 'Why do we always have men selling to women?'" says McGill, 'Why not have women selling to women?'"

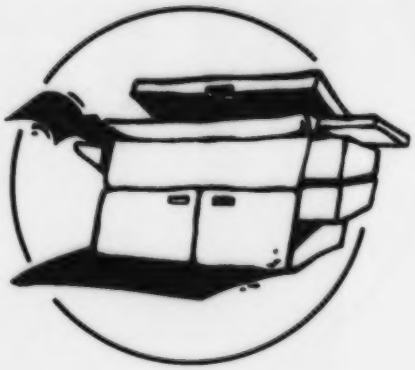
During the first stage of her career, Huneck sold Pitney Bowes' products to companies' shipping and receiving departments, generally at the back of warehouses, where the walls would often be plastered with pictures of scantily clad women. "These experiences taught me that I had to maintain my professionalism at all times," she says, "I couldn't let it go for a minute."

Huneck has faced very little discrimination in her job and has generally found her male colleagues to be helpful. "Some just ignored me, at first," she says, "mostly, I suspect, because they didn't think I'd last. But eventually they couldn't, because when you start to produce and you're doing well, they realize you're going to be around for a while. For the most part, though, I'd have to say that people have been very supportive — particularly management."

Once having decided it made good business sense to hire more women in sales, Pitney Bowes found the job wasn't all that easy. "Traditionally, women haven't applied for these kind of jobs," say McGill, "so we didn't have enough female candidates." To attract more women the firm developed a new recruitment advertising campaign that featured female employees giving "testimonials" about their work. "In a city where we'd found it tough to hire people, suddenly we were swamped with applicants," recalls McGill.

Pitney Bowes is hiring more and more people with college or university degrees these days and, since the equipment is changing, feels that some knowledge of software and computer sciences is helpful for candidates. Essentially, however, the firm is looking for people who are bright, have high energy levels and a capacity to learn fast.

Part of Huneck's job today is to hire people and she passes on to prospective employees her own enthusiasm for the job. "The money is great; it's exciting; you have a fair amount of freedom — you aren't stuck at a desk all day," she says. "You meet different people all the time, and at Pitney Bowes, there are some excellent incentives." Huneck also says that the whole business of selling is changing and that this is an advantage to women.



"In photocopier sales, for example, the customer has probably talked to three of my competitors, possibly knows more about copiers than I do, and is going to ask some very intelligent questions. If I don't have good product knowledge and can't give the right answers, the customer is going to buy somewhere else. So it's no longer possible to rely on the old 'best buddies' approach."

Does Huneck feel it's important to ask the same kind of questions that she asked when she went for an interview at Pitney Bowes? "Yes, absolutely," she says. "If company support isn't there, you aren't going to go anywhere."

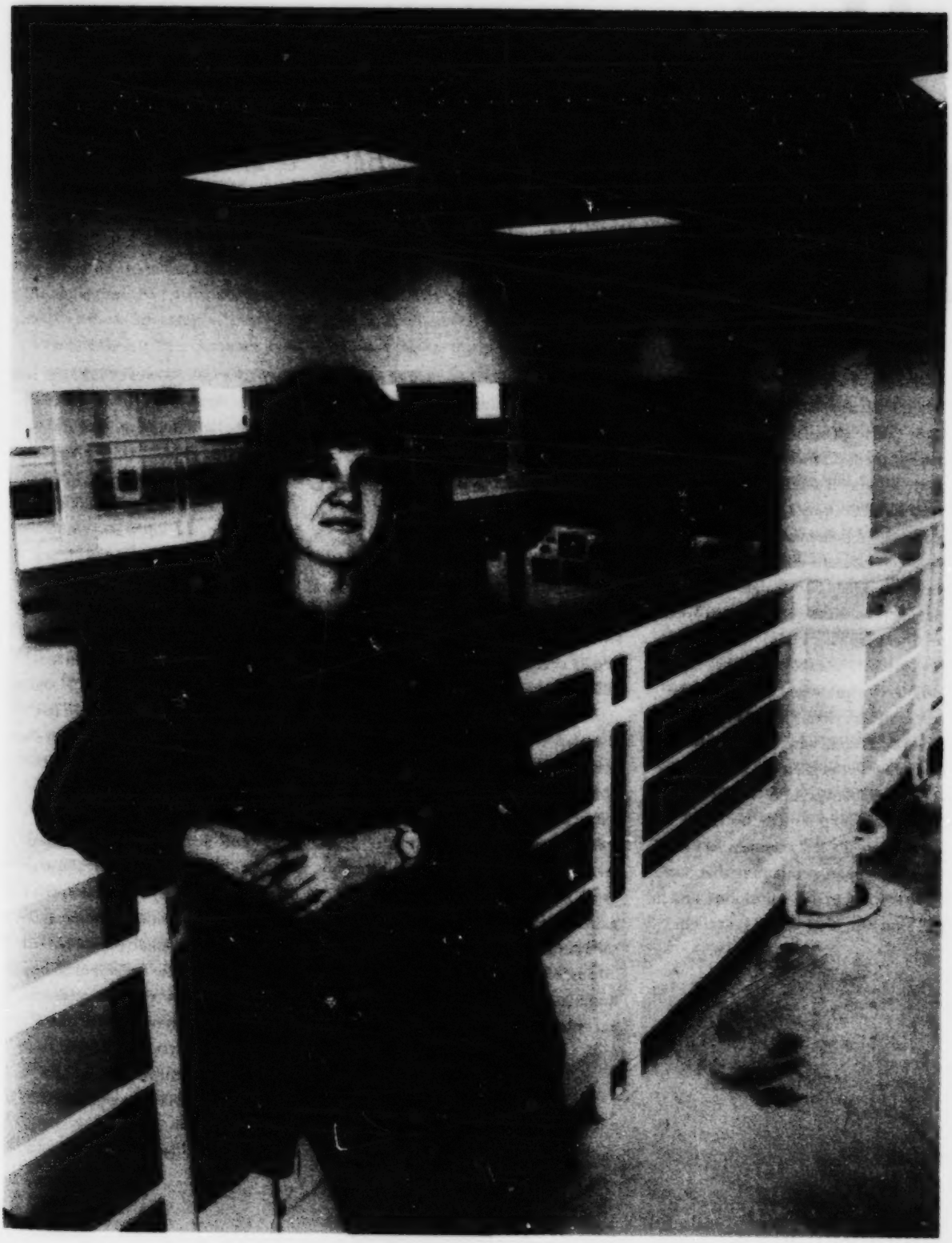
Dorothée Couture

Sales Representative

Canada Trust Commercial Real Estate Services

(Canada Trustco Mortgage Company) — the largest loan and trust company in Canada, and Canada's second largest commercial real estate brokerage firm, with 200 real estate offices across the country.

Once Dorothée Couture decided to pursue a career in commercial real estate, it was a non-issue that this is a male-dominated industry. Having worked as a sole female in a number of jobs, the prospect of having to break into another field was no deterrent. ☆ Even so, when she obtained her real estate licence and started to research commercial brokers, she came up against a few brick walls. "We're getting 35 applications a day from men, so why would we hire a woman?" Couture recalls being told. "Some companies



"As long as you have the discipline necessary to be your own boss, you can control when, where and how you'll do your job."

wouldn't even give me the time of day. When I learned that Canada Permanent (now Canada Trust) was looking to fill management positions, I thought they might also need salespeople." Canada Trust hired Couture as a commercial real estate representative in 1983.

When Couture started with the firm there were only two female commercial agents with the company in Toronto. There are now eight. "When we hire, we hire salespeople," says Gerry Gotfrit, vice-president of commercial real estate services for Canada Trust. "If a person is well-suited to sales we don't care about their sex, their age or their racial background. We hire them, train them and put them to work. I know there are still commercial brokerage companies out there that don't have women in these positions, and in the long run, it's going to hurt them."

In exploring the potential of joining Canada Trust, Couture's industry experience exceeded that of most other candidates. She brought with her a degree in interior design as well as experience in the design of commercial premises and restaurants. Her work as a tenant co-ordinator on a number of major Toronto developments also gave her an inside view of landlord and tenant needs. She sold herself on the basis of these credentials when she met with Canada Trust.

When Couture started as a commercial realtor, she encountered prejudice common toward women working in non-traditional roles. She was told by male colleagues that she wouldn't last, that women never did. Dorothée recalls that it took a $4 million listing to break down those initial barriers and gain the respect of her fellow salespeople.

Since women breaking into male-dominated work environments are the exception, they are highly visible. When they quit, however valid the reason, their departure is more noticeable (where a man's might not be) and is often used as proof that "women can't hack the business."

In spite of the obstacles Couture had to battle, she knew she could count on management support. She felt that Canada Trust having hired her, in spite of industry trends, was an indication that the company supported the entry of women into the commercial real estate business. In addition, during day-to-day operations, Couture had confidence in the knowledge that she was being treated equitably. "Visible support at the top filters down," she says, "making your life a lot easier."

Couture sees many opportunities for women in commercial real estate sales — particularly for women who want to work outside the home and raise a family. A single parent herself, she appreciates the freedom she has in determining her own work schedule. "As long as you have the discipline necessary to be your own boss, you can control when, where and how you'll do your job. One of the beauties

about commercial real estate is that, unlike residential sales, you rarely work nights and weekends."

As long as salespeople achieve the goals they have set in conjunction with the company, Canada Trust doesn't police their comings and goings. "If you're well-organized, disciplined and manage time well, you can balance work, family and personal responsibilities quite nicely," says Gotfrit, "and you have the ability to make a lot of money at the same time. Not many occupations offer those advantages."

When dealing with a customer looking for a property, Couture determines the specific needs with respect to type of property, size, use, timing, budgets, and a host of other criteria. If she is marketing a property she develops an understanding of what's important from the perspective of the owner, then gears her effort to realizing those objectives.

Commercial realtors sell or lease office, retail, or industrial buildings. Couture has built her client base over the last five years through cold calling, prospecting, and referrals. With each successive year in the business, the percentage of her business done due to referrals has increased.

All commercial realtors at Canada Trust are paid a commission on business written. The split the salesperson receives is determined on an ascending scale — ratios increase in the salesperson's favor as deals are completed and commissions are booked. "It's not uncommon for successful people in this business to earn six figures consistently," says Gotfrit.

When a person joins Canada Trust's commercial real estate division, the company provides a comprehensive training curriculum. Topics include such things as fundamental communication skills, telephone prospecting, negotiating and closing techniques. Training is an ongoing process at Canada Trust whether it is shaping the skills of the rookies or building on the strengths of experienced salespeople.

If Gotfrit and Couture have any advice to give to employers about hiring women for non-traditional sales occupations, it's this: "Don't differentiate when you advertise, when you interview, when you hire, when you promote, when you pay. Hire people because they're the best qualified for the job. And let them know that's why you hired them!"

"We look for individuals who are enthusiastic and excited about selling," says Gotfrit. "While we might look to see if anything in their background supports selling real estate, the key is their ability to sell. If they have the motivation, we can teach them everything they need to know to do the job effectively."

Gotfrit believes that Canada Trust's initiative in hiring women as sales representatives gives the company an edge in recruiting the best possible people. As he explains it: "At the end of the day, I have to produce and all of my staff have to produce. Whether they're men or women, that's the bottom line."

"Confidence in yourself is the key," says Couture. "You've got to believe that you can do the job and that your sex is immaterial. That's how you'll be successful."

According to Couture, another key to success in sales is selling a product or service in a field that you really enjoy. "As simple as it sounds," she says, "it should be the rule. If I thought I'd be happier selling cosmetics than real estate, and if I could make a good living at it, that's what I'd be doing today."

As a successful salesperson herself, Couture encourages women to consider careers in commercial real estate. "I think women make the best salespeople," she says. "Yes, there's a lot of pressure. Yes, it's very competitive. And yes, there's a certain amount of strain working strictly on commission. But you wouldn't catch me doing anything else."

Eileen Hardy

District Manager of Builder Sales

Camco Inc. *— the largest manufacturer and distributor in Canada of major appliances including the General Electric, Hotpoint, Moffat, and McClary brand names.*

"I couldn't count the number of times I've been told, 'If you were a man we'd give you a briefcase and put you in sales,'" says 61-year-old Eileen Hardy, district manager of builder sales for Camco Inc. "Being of the generation I am, I accepted that kind of a comment as a compliment. And when I was asked if I would take a sales position in the company, one of the first filled by a woman, I was very flattered and elated. But I have to say I'm sorry that it wasn't offered to me 15 years ago." ✯ Hardy's 18 years of experience with Camco, in positions such as product planning and forecasting and as supervisor of the order desks, has helped her become one of

People often say to me, 'Eileen, you were born a generation too soon and now you're a generation too late,'" Hardy laughs.

the most successful sales people in the organization. Today, she is the person responsible for handling one of the company's biggest clients.

Hardy has worked outside the home for a living since she graduated from Grade 13 in 1945. She left the paid workforce when the first of her two children was born and stayed home until her youngest child went to school full-time. In 1959, she returned to the full-time paid workforce as secretary to the credit manager for Kelvinator.

In 1970, Hardy began working for the company that is now known as Camco. Her first job, handling forecasting and planning production, was also a new job for a woman. "People often say to me, 'Eileen, you were born a generation too soon and now you're a generation too late,'" she laughs.

Hardy was offered the job she currently holds in February 1988. She sells major appliances — such as refrigerators, electric ranges, dishwashers, washers, dryers and microwave ovens — to builders for new houses, condominiums and apartments. Much of her selling is done on the telephone and she sometimes sells, quotes, orders and delivers products to clients without ever meeting them. Ideas for prospective clients come from a number of sources. Hardy may see a new condominium being built as she drives to work, note the contractor's name and telephone number, call the firm when she reaches the office and ask if she can give them a quote on providing Camco appliances. She also reads trade magazines that list buildings coming up for construction.

While one would think that selling appliances would be a "traditional" rather than a "non-traditional" job for women, since they have been the primary appliance users for generations, this hasn't been the case. Tom Powell, builder sales manager for Camco, says, in the past, men usually signed the cheques for major purchases and even old sales-training films taught salespeople to direct their answers to men's questions.

"But the company has recognized that times have changed," he says. "In many cases now women earn as much as their husbands — sometimes more — and more men and women are sharing duties in the home."

Recent customer surveys conducted by Camco have also shown that women are now signing the cheque for major appliances and this has forced the company to re-think its sales strategies — including who sells. "We used to have a mindset that only men could sell appliances, particularly to builders," says Michel Trudel, Camco's vice-president of sales. "But we're realizing that doesn't make a lot of sense and so we're changing our mindset. We're doing it for good business reasons — we want to be more successful."

Salespeople at Camco make between $28,000 and $45,000 from earnings and commissions, with bonuses on top of that. Approximately 75 per cent of a sales person's income comes from a base salary; 25 per cent from commission. Sales people also have a company car and an expense account. Bonuses are paid on the basis of how well the sales team does, not on individual performance. "In our industry, one market, such as London,

might be cool while another, like Toronto, might be hot," says Powell. "The salesperson in London might be working just as hard as the one in Toronto but he or she won't be penalized because of economic conditions."

More and more of Camco's new sales staff have college or university degrees, generally in business, arts or science, but the company also considers equivalent work experience. All new entrants, regardless of education, work in telephone sales and in administration for the first six months. "Eileen was hired into sales because she knew the business inside out," says Trudel, "not because she had a sales background. And that's the new direction. Sales people today have to be more competent than ever with business skills they've never had before."

While Hardy's supervisors knew that she had the knowledge and the ability to do a good job, they nevertheless had some concerns about how she would be accepted by customers and co-workers, who were primarily male. "The construction industry is rough and tough," says Powell, "and a very demanding business to be in. We didn't know how buyers would react to a female salesperson. But one of the keys to success is earning buyers' respect and showing them what you can do. And Eileen did that."

Hardy feels that she has been "received beautifully" by her colleagues and her clients. "Traditional roles are falling by the wayside every day," she says. "Labels such as district manager are just that — labels. They say you have a certain collection of skills. They don't say they are male or female skills."

Both Hardy and her supervisors agree that changing attitudes toward women in the workplace are making it much easier for women to move into non-traditional sales. "My generation is far more guilty of chauvinism than the younger generation," says Hardy. "The only situations I've experienced where there's been a difficulty with my being female — whether it was spoken or not — have been with people my own age. But even they are changing as they see more and more women occupying, and being successful in, jobs that used to be men's. I say to a lot of young women, 'I'm going to do a heck of a job so that you can get in there quicker than I could.'"

Another key to success for women entering any non-traditional occupation, or moving up through the organization, is commitment and support from the top. "We've had a very clear message from our president, Steve Snyder, that we have to have more women throughout the company," says Trudel. "If you look at things in the traditional way, you aren't going to make major progress in anything. You constantly have to look at how to improve your business — and it's usually through non-traditional avenues — whether it's hiring women or finding different distribution channels. You simply have to move with the times. It's a pretty logical conclusion when you think about it."

Camco has instituted a number of employment equity initiatives to ensure that women, and other designated groups, have full and equal access to job opportunities. It regularly reviews developmental opportunities for women in the organization, for example, to make sure women are aware of, and can take advantage of, promotions as they arise. It has a two year, in-house training program through which employees, on rotating assignments, can get experience in various operations of the company. And

the company is currently looking at alternative work arrangements to ensure the company adapts to current lifestyle changes.

A company's support of its employees can be shown in a number of ways, but for Eileen Hardy it all comes down to one thing —fairness. "All I want is for the company to be fair when they hire me; to pay me the same as they would a man with the same skills; and to give me the same tools they would give anyone else. I'll do the rest," she says. "My one determination is to be the best that I can be — not better than anybody else, or better than a man — just the best that I can be."

Jennifer Dawkins

National Dealer Organization Manager

Passport International Automobiles

— a division of General Motors of Canada Limited that sells imported cars and trucks.

In 1977, when General Motors of Canada Limited was recruiting on campus at the University of New Brunswick, it was discouraged to learn that not a single woman had applied for the sales positions it was filling. ✨ After GM appealed to the university, however, the dean of the business administration faculty called a number of female graduates and encouraged them to apply. One of them was Jennifer Dawkins. ✨ "I think women hadn't applied because they saw GM very much as a male bastion," she says. "Even when I was offered a job I had to think hard about it. I had planned to further my education at that time; I wasn't sure I

"If companies don't look at hiring women into non-traditional occupations they're making a mistake."

wanted to work for as large a company as GM; and I really knew very little about the field. But I thought GM had been smart to see that if women weren't going to them, they'd have to go to women."

Dawkins did accept the job and now, 11 years later, she is national dealer organization manager for Passport International Automobiles, a division of GM Canada that has an entirely separate dealer network selling only imported cars and trucks from Isuzu and Daewoo.

Sales, service and marketing people at GM go through a number of different operations in the company as they build their careers. During Dawkin's extensive on-the-job training with the company she moved through positions such as product distribution specialist and district sales manager, and learned about sales finance, fleet sales, and sales and profit forecasting. This experience, gained in Moncton, New Brunswick, Toronto and Oshawa, where she now works, helped build the knowledge and expertise she puts into practice today.

Dawkins' current job is to build a dealer network across Canada which will consist of 150 dealers when it is fully operational. This means that Dawkins travels a lot, spending perhaps three days a week out of the office, and she rarely puts in less than 10 hours a day — sometimes more. Currently, nine field managers across the country look for potential dealers who are then recommended to Dawkins who helps make the final selection. She will also look at buildings and sites for possible Passport operations and keep an eye on how current dealers are doing financially.

"Dealer contact jobs are not easy at the best of times," says Bill Atkinson, vice-president of sales-service-marketing for GM Canada, "and they were difficult for the first women who went into them. The business has been heavily male-dominated for a long time. It's a fast-paced, high-risk business for dealers. They're small business people, they take a tremendous gamble, and it was difficult for them to adapt to women coming in telling them how to run their operations."

Dawkins concurs. She says being a district sales manager is difficult for most new people because they're generally young and fairly new to the business, and they're telling a dealer how to run a business that they've probably been in for 20 years. "And then, to top it all off," she quips, "you're a woman. It was tough!"

Both Atkinson and Dawkins agree that the key to success in dealer sales and service contact is earning the dealers' respect. "I tell a district sales manager — be respected first and liked second," says Atkinson. Dawkins earned respect by learning everything she could about the dealer business. "If there's one way to get into dealers' good books, it's by telling them how to make more money," she says. "So I became very good at that."

Dawkins feels, particularly in her line of work, that women do have to work harder than men to get the respect of their customers and co-workers. Nevertheless, she definitely feels that attitudes are changing. "One of the interesting things I notice is that more and more of the dealers have daughters who attend university and are starting to think about careers," she says, "and so the dealers are able to empathize with me more."

Dawkins has worked for a number of years with the Woman's Advisory Council at GM, which was established in 1983 to recommend and implement specific employment equity initiatives

for salaried women. So she has seen, first hand, how the organization is changing — particularly as younger men join the company. "When I graduated from business school, less than 10 per cent of my class were women," she says. "Now more than 50 per cent are women. Younger men are consequently much more used to working alongside women and are seeing, of course, that women are doing very well — we're equal partners. Young men have no problem today accepting me as their manager."

Women still face some difficulties on the job, however, simply because they are women. When Dawkins travels on business, for example, she often finds herself in out-of-the-way places. "If I were a man, the dealer or the sales manager would undoubtedly ask me to join him for a drink or dinner. When you're a woman, they're reluctant to do that — and you're reluctant to suggest it. It can consequently be quite lonely and that's something you have to deal with."

Now that women are making a success of sales careers in GM, what is the next step for the company? "What we have to do now is get more women moving up through the ranks," says Atkinson. "I'd say we have a dozen women at the moment who are ready for the next jump and we have to make sure that happens. In the next five years we're going to see good progression." In the sales, service and marketing department, the company reviews staff readiness, experience and training on a monthly basis to help employees prepare for management positions. In 1980 there were 40 women in first-line management positions in sales, service and marketing; today there are 71 — a 77.5 per cent increase in spite of a 25 per cent streamlining in the organization since 1983, and hiring restrictions since 1980. Today, 32 per cent of first line contact people are women

GM generally looks for people with university degrees when hiring for its sales force. They also look for people with a business or marketing background. The company uses two assessment tools to ensure that women are given an equal chance of securing sales, service and marketing positions.

The first is a selection tool used in the hiring process. After the first interview with GM, selected candidates attend a performance-based interview where they are put into three, 10-minute mini-simulations of incidents they will encounter as field representatives. Candidates who perform well at this point then go to an Assessment Centre at GM where they get one-and-a-half days of more intense simulated experiences and where they get a much better understanding of what will actually be required of them on the job.

The second assessment tool is used for developmental purposes. When employees are between middle and senior management positions, where more skills will be required, GM reviews their careers and experience to identify areas that might need further development.

Technical knowledge used to be the major stumbling block for women who wanted to sell products like cars — employers simply assumed women didn't have any. But that is no longer the case. "There's much more of a focus on business knowledge than technical knowledge today," says Wayne Townsend, senior administrator, sales programs. "Most people, male or female, have enough technical skills to understand the product. We give technical training as part of our 7-week new-hire training program and we don't find any difference in technical knowledge between men and women

— unless someone happens to be a car buff, of course."

As more and more women move into the labor force GM recognizes that it has to adapt its organization to the large numbers of female employees who are contributing to the company. "The working woman is here to stay," says Dawkins. "Many women now work out of economic need, but, in addition to that, women are becoming better educated and have a great deal to bring to the organization. I think the company is aware that it has to keep up with these kinds of changes if it's going to retain the best people."

For Atkinson, the reasons for hiring and training women are very simple: "If companies don't look at hiring women into non-traditional occupations they're making a mistake," he says. "They're simply missing out on a tremendous pool of talented, intelligent and well qualified people who can do a terrific job for them."

Tips for Employers

Moving Women into Non-Traditional Sales

The manner and the speed with which women are integrated into non-traditional sales jobs will vary from organization to organization. For those employers who have found it difficult to envision women in such jobs or are reluctant to hire them, the process of integration will take a little longer. On the other hand, employers who believe in equal opportunity in the workplace and accept the changing roles of women, are likely to employ them more readily in a wider range of jobs, including non-traditional sales. The employers profiled in this publication have all demonstrated that women can succeed in traditionally male-dominated sales occupations.

Employers are taking proactive measures to increase the representation of women at all levels of their workforce. For example, some of the employers profiled here have established special recruitment measures in conjunction with employment equity program initiatives. One of the first steps for employers implementing employment equity programs, is to review their employment policies and practices. Such a review helps to identify and eliminate artificial employment barriers caused by systemic discrimination. Systemic discrimination refers to employment policies and practices

which result in the denial of opportunity for employment and advancement for reasons that are not job-related. The consequences of systemic discrimination are sex-role stereotyping and occupational segregation. As more and more employment equity programs are established, the rate at which women are integrated into historically male-dominated jobs will be accelerated.

If you are considering adding women to your sales team or wish to increase their representation in your sales force, there are a number of measures you can take not only to recruit them but to encourage them to stay once they are hired. Some of the measures to consider are reflected in the checklists which are included in this chapter and relate to: 1) establishing corporate commitment, 2) recruiting and selecting female sales representatives, and 3) creating a supportive working environment.

Establishing Corporate Commitment

As the participants in this publication have noted, employers will be far more successful in increasing the representation of women in their sales force when there is visible, senior management commitment, particularly at the level of the chief executive officer. This commitment can be formal — written into a company's strategic plans, human resources policy manuals, employment equity policy, and so on.

Corporate commitment can also be communicated verbally by the CEO to senior management, by senior managers to line management, and by line managers to their employees. However such commitment is expressed, a clear message from the CEO, is a crucial step in the process of successfully integrating women into your sales team.

Corporate Commitment Checklist

- Do you have a corporate policy statement on employment equity?
- Has the chief executive officer communicated to all employees the organization's interest and commitment to increasing the representation of women in its sales force and in other occupational groups in which they are under-represented?
- Are designated women employees invited to participate in the development of strategies to more fully integrate women at all levels of the organization?
- Does the organization's operational plan include stated goals for the employment of women in sales?
- Are planned initiatives to achieve stated goals being managed by a senior management executive, with accountability and direct reporting responsibility to the chief executive officer?
- Is there an employment equity program in place to ensure that women and other designated groups such as visible minorities, native people and people with disabilities have access to equal employment opportunity in your organization?

Recruiting and Selecting Female Sales Representatives

It is not uncommon to hear employers say that they are unable to recruit qualified women for non-traditional employment. Some employers have indicated that their usual recruitment sources such as advertising in major newspapers, have not attracted many female applicants. The fact is, however, some employers have been more successful than others in reaching female job applicants. The ones who have been more successful seemed to have added a special measure to their usual recruitment methods. For example one of the companies profiled in this publication featured female sales representatives in their newspaper ads giving testimonials about the job. Identifying women already in the company, with an interest in sales, and encouraging them to consider a sales career, also proved to be a successful recruitment means for some employers. There are indeed a number of measures which organizations can consider in their quest for female sales representatives. The recruitment and selection checklist which follows exemplifies some of these measures.

Recruitment and Selection Checklist

◆ Do your recruitment and selection policies recognize the growing ambitions and increased participation of women in the paid labor force?

◆ Are company personnel with responsibility for recruitment and selection trained in bias-free recruitment methods?

◆ Are stated specifications job related, and free of systemic barriers such as requirements for "Canadian experience," inflated academic qualifications and extensive years of experience?

◆ Have you reviewed your recruitment promotional materials, including the tone of written text, the illustrations and the graphics, to ensure that the focus is not on men only, and that terms such as salesperson or sales representative are used instead of salesman?

◆ Have you conveyed to prospective employees, in job advertisements, for example, and to your clients that you are an "Equal Employment Opportunity Employer"?

◆ Have you ensured that there is no inherent race or gender bias in your job selection criteria, including tests, assessment tools and other methods of evaluating prospective employees?

◆ Are women included on your recruitment and selection team?

◆ Have you advised recruitment sources such as employment agencies and university and college placement offices that you are interested in recruiting women sales representatives?

◆ Have you encouraged some of your own employees with sales potential to pursue a sales career through means such as lunch-time in-company seminars to talk about what the work involves, the required skills, and available company assistance programs?

◆ Does your organization participate in special events such as "career days" and "job fairs"?

◆ Has your organization considered advertising in selected women's magazines and association newsletters?

◆ Has the organization established an inventory of potentially qualified female applicants to train as sales representatives to fill prospective vacancies?

◆ Are applicants given credit for their non-salaried, volunteer, but related, sales work experience?

Creating a Supportive Working Environment

Organizations with a keen interest in attracting women sales representatives will likely want to take the added step of ensuring that the working environment is hospitable and supportive. It is worth noting that the sexism that has sometimes made it difficult for women to claim their right to equal opportunity in employment, still exists in a number of today's workforces. The fact that sexist attitudes are not easily changed necessitates organizations putting in place special measures to help ensure the successful integration of women into their working environment, particularly in non-traditional and historically male-dominated occupations. Such measures might include the implementation of a sexual harassment policy and the provision of orientation sessions for employees to learn more about the organization's culture and standards, employee rights and employer obligations.

Supportive Environment Checklist

◆ Have you communicated to all employees that discriminatory or sexist attitudes and patronizing behaviors are not tolerated by your organization?
◆ Have you identified and addressed areas of organizational resistance to the occupational integration of women?
◆ Have you implemented anti-harassment workplace policies with specific regard to sexual and racial harassment?
◆ Are there established procedures for dealing with complaints of harassment and discrimination and are such procedures known throughout the organization?
◆ Have you ensured that women employees are not undermined in your organization through the display of posters featuring nude or scantily clad women?
◆ Are male employees discouraged from addressing women as "girls," "sweetheart" or "honey"?
◆ Does your organization give awards to "Top Salesperson of the Year" rather than to Top Salesman of the Year?
◆ Does the organization's training program include training on employment equity and compliance with human rights legislation?
◆ Have you reviewed your organization's policies and practices relating to employment systems such as training and development, to ensure that they do not inadvertently exclude women from advancing in the organization?
◆ Is training, beyond the scope of an employee's present job, encouraged?
◆ Is your organization considering measures to help employees harmonize their work and family responsibilities?

Summary

The successful integration of women into occupations where they have been historically under-represented should be regarded as a shared responsibility between employers and employees. Employers should assume responsibility for letting women know that they are seriously interested in hiring and promoting them. Women employees can share the responsibility by identifying and taking advantage of training and development opportunities to acquire needed skills for employment and advancement on the job.

Some of the initiatives which are reflected in the checklists will have already been implemented in a number of organizations. Some can be implemented immediately while others will take time and planning. Essentially, serious consideration must be given to determining how best to establish the kind of employment policies and working environment that will motivate employees and help women succeed in the organization.

Tips for Employees

A career in non-traditional sales has proven to be both challenging and rewarding for the women profiled in this publication. These women have met the challenge of being a pioneer, debunking traditional stereotypes about what women can and cannot do. They have also seized the opportunity to work in a field that provides them with tremendous job satisfaction and considerable financial reward. While it is evident from the women and the organizations represented in this publication that employer and employee attitudes about the occupational integration of women are beginning to reflect the changing times, a number of women entering non-traditional occupations still experience employment discrimination. If a career in non-traditional sales appeals to you, this section of the publication will provide you with some general information about working in sales.

Should You Consider a Career in Sales?

As noted earlier in this publication, sales people today are professional, generally have a good education and usually receive thorough on-the-job-training. Educational requirements vary from industry to industry and from sales job to sales job. For some occupations, such as real estate and investment sales, specialized training, certificates and accreditation are needed. For others such as some high-technology sales, you might need a degree in a particular field, like engineering.

There are hundreds of sales occupations for which no specialized education is required. Many companies recruiting for sales positions today have de-emphasized technical knowledge and have placed more emphasis on personal characteristics such as determination, self-confidence and good communication skills. Once you have decided which product or service you want to sell, you will have to check what education is required. You can get this information by calling the human resources department of a company that provides the relevant product or service.

Although sales experience helps when you are looking for a sales job, some companies do not consider it essential. Other companies will accept sales experience in lieu of preferred academic credentials. It is important to include any specific or related sales experience you have had on your resumé or make mention of it during a job interview. This might include sales experience gained from fundraising or the selling of subscriptions.

Although employers are no longer looking for people with the traditional typecast "sales personality," and women have a far better chance of entering non-traditional sales occupations, employers and experienced salespeople believe certain personal characteristics show sales potential. If you feel you have most of the following characteristics, you are probably the kind of person employers are looking for on their sales team.

Personal Characteristics Checklist

- ◆ Do you enjoy meeting people?
- ◆ Do you have good communication skills?
- ◆ Are you energetic and enthusiastic?
- ◆ Do you have a strong determination to succeed?
- ◆ Are you self-motivated and able to work independently?
- ◆ Are you self-disciplined?
- ◆ Do you like diversity and change?
- ◆ Do you dislike routine desk work and rigid working hours?
- ◆ Do you have confidence in yourself and in your abilities?
- ◆ Do you enjoy problem-solving?
- ◆ Are you a good listener?
- ◆ Are you usually successful in influencing people?
- ◆ Are you persistent?
- ◆ Are you a risk-taker?
- ◆ Are you competitive?
- ◆ Do you have a good sense of humor?

Researching Sales Opportunities

Before researching sales opportunities, you will have already determined whether you would like to sell a product or a service. Either way, the product or service should be something you would actively enjoy selling. Don't limit your choice to one employer. You'll be able to make a more informed decision by learning as much as you can about different companies.

The method of pay and benefits and the working conditions and employment policies, vary from company to company. The bottom line is to select the company you feel will best meet your personal and professional goals.

While your own behavior, attitude and professionalism will be a big factor in making a successful career, the policies and practices of the company for whom you will work will make an even bigger contribution to your ability to succeed. For this reason, it's important to select your employer carefully. Don't be afraid to ask a potential employer as many questions as possible. Consider the answers carefully. If you aren't satisfied with the answers, weigh your options before deciding whether to accept or reject a job offer.

The best sources of information are the companies in the field that interests you. If you need to expand on the list of companies you would like to approach, there are a number of sources to which you can refer. These include the business and employment sections in local newspapers, trade and professional organizations and directories such as The Canadian Trade Index, Scott's Directories and The Financial Post Survey of Industrials. These are all available at your local library. The library is also an excellent place to do additional research on sales as a career and can provide you with a lot of what you need to know to be successful in sales.

Sales Opportunities Checklist

- ◆ Have you developed a list of prospective employers in the sales field you have chosen?
- ◆ Have you considered calling some of the companies you've selected to request a meeting with the sales manager or a salesperson to talk about work in the field and your interest in working for them?
- ◆ Have you determined the required qualifications for work in your chosen field?
- ◆ Do you know the companies that are reputed to be the best in the field?
- ◆ Are there other women in that occupation?
- ◆ What are the opportunities for advancement?
- ◆ Have you determined what training and development opportunities are available through educational institutions or are offered by prospective employers?
- ◆ Have you determined from prospective employers whether they have an employment equity program or other similar special programs?
- ◆ Have you determined what percentage of your earnings will be salary and what percentage will be commission?
- ◆ Are bonuses and incentives offered and on what basis?
- ◆ Do you know what company expenses cover (company car, out-of-town travel and accommodation, business meals, etc.)?

Overcoming Barriers

When you are offered a non-traditional sales job you will have already overcome one of the biggest barriers of all — employers' historical reluctance to hire women into male-dominated occupations. Having challenged and overcome this barrier, both you and your new employer have reason to celebrate!

Throughout your career, it is important to remember that you got the job because you have the qualifications and the ability to do it well. It is important to remember this point because, the fact that you have succeeded in landing the position, doesn't mean that you will never encounter prejudicial attitudes or discriminatory behaviors in the workplace. But forewarned is forearmed.

Overcoming Barriers Checklist

- Have you acquired as much information as possible about the occupation and the company you have chosen?
- Have you determined how you will deal with sexist remarks or other discriminatory behavior if this occurs?
- Do you know what organizational policies and procedures have been established to deal with sexual and other forms of personal harassment?
- Have you determined the likelihood of encountering customer resistance and how best to deal with it?
- Are you aware of company etiquette regarding business lunches and dinners and customer relationship?
- Do you know how you will handle picking up the tab for meals, drinks or taxis for male colleagues or clients who might be uncomfortable with accepting such offers?
- Have you formulated some survival strategies for when travelling alone, in remote rural areas for example?
- Have you determined how you will deal with inappropriate forms of address such as "honey" or "sweetie"?

Conclusion

Employers and employees both stand to gain from the movement of women into non-traditional sales. The integration of women in this occupational category offers considerable personal, professional and financial rewards to women. Women enable employers to draw from a broader pool of qualified workers.

Old attitudes about women's ability to be successful in non-traditional occupations are being challenged every day. The seven women whom this publication profiles have earned the respect of their colleagues and customers simply by doing a good job.

In spite of the well-documented achievements of women in non-traditional sales, much still needs to be done before the many barriers to women's equal participation in the labor force are removed. Employment equity can play a vital role in this regard. A well-planned employment equity program helps to ensure the full and equitable participation of historically disadvantaged groups. It also enables employers to implement workplace policies and practices that maximize the potential of all their employees.

The Change Agent Program under which this publication is produced is designed to help employers implement innovative employment equity projects. If you are interested in implementing an employment equity program, the Ontario Women's Directorate will be pleased to provide needed assistance.

Increasingly, employers are coming to realize that employment equity makes good business sense.

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Increasingly, employers are coming to realize that employment equity makes good business sense.

Ontario Women's Directorate Consultative Services Branch

The Ontario Women's Directorate is the agency in the Ontario government that co-ordinates the development and communication of programs and policies for women. Its aim is economic, social and legal equality for women in Ontario.

The Consultative Services Branch of the directorate specializes in the area of employment equity. It is responsible for encouraging the planning, development and expansion of employment equity programs in Ontario's private and public sectors.

In order to achieve this goal, the branch provides a wide range of consulting services to employers who are either just beginning to initiate employment equity programs, or who wish to expand those that are already established. Consultants offer employment equity strategies that are tailored to the organization's particular environment. The services that this branch offers include:

- Workshops and seminars
- Technical guides and information
- Videos
- Opportunities to exchange ideas with other employers through Change Agent demonstration projects.
- Recognition of success through annual awards in employer excellence.

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